Sesquicentennial Paper No. 1

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

and

OUR NATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

Edited by

GUY S. KLETT

Special Research Historian
of the
Department of History
(Presbyterian Historical Society)
of the Office of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

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PREFACE

IN VIEW of the approaching celebration of the Sesquicentennial of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the preparation of the following notes on the relation of the Presbyterian Church to our national foundations has seemed timely. The work was undertaken in response to a number of requests from pastors for material which might be used in sermons and addresses, dealing with the part played by Presbyterians in the stirring events of the Revolutionary Period.

The endeavor has been made to gather such material as is not generally accessible, by compiling it from contemporary documents as well as from reliable secondary sources. This material has been arranged to coincide with the political events as interrelated parts of the whole; and although the amount of material is necessarily limited by space, the character of the information is such as to portray faithfully the nature of Presbyterian activity in those eventful days.

Since the pre-Revolutionary period was one in which religious events had a decided bearing upon civil affairs, a considerable amount of space has been devoted to the question of the establishment of Episcopacy as a grievance, coupled with the economic and governmental disabilities of that age. For, although the religious issue did not become a factor in the struggle itself, it had its share in arousing Presbyterians as a group in opposition to the claims of the mother country.

Finally, in the consideration of the part that Presbyterians played in such events as the Declaration of Independence, the Revolution, and the establishment of a national union under the Constitution of the United States, any disposition to minimize the contribution of other groups is distinctly disavowed.

THOS. C. PEARS, JR., L.H.D.
Manager of the Department of History.

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I. THE PRESBYTERIANS IN OPPOSITION TO EPISCOPACY

1. Newspaper Controversy on the Establishment of Episcopacy, 1768-1769

Discussion on the subject of introducing American bishops first became general in the newspapers in 1768, and reached its height during the course of this and the following year. It was ushered in by two series of articles: one in the *New York Gazette*, under the signature of "The American Whig"; the other in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, under the signature of "The Centinel" (or "Sentinel"). Though the several numbers of each series were evidently written by different hands, the chief contributors under these respective names seem to have been William Livingston and Francis Alison. The latter, vice-provost of the College of Philadelphia, was assisted by some of his Presbyterian brethren, particularly John Dickinson, the celebrated author of *The Farmer's Letters*. The ostensible purpose of these articles was to answer Chandler's *Appeal to the Public*, though it has been conjectured that the disappointment occasioned by the failure of the New York Presbyterians in 1767 to obtain their charter of incorporation, a defeat which they attributed to the Bishop of London, may have had some influence in the matter. The "American Whig" was answered by "Timothy Tickle" in "A Whip for the American Whig," who was in turn called to account by "Sir Isaac Foot" in "A Kick for the Whipper." The chief opponent of the "Centinel" was Dr. William Smith, provost of the College of Philadelphia, who wrote a series of essays under the pseudonym of "The Anatomist."

Arthur Lyon Cross, *The Anglican Episcopate and the American Colonies*, pp. 194-195.

. . . In reviewing the arguments of the two parties concerned, we find that those who contended for the introduction of bishops sought to prove that no temporal authority was expected or desired for the proposed episcopate, and hence that the matter concerned the Episcopal communion as a purely religious body, and that all other persons or persuasions were unjust, intolerant, and meddlesome in interfering. Their opponents, on the other hand, insisted that they had all the reason in the world for concerning themselves in the question; that, in spite of all assurances to the contrary, they had good cause to fear that the proposed establishment would involve in time many innovations, such as spiritual courts, the assumption of secular functions by the bishops, the taxation of the inhabitants for the maintenance of the episcopate and the introduction of tithes—a measure which would be a dangerous menace to the integrity of their institutions, political and civil. They went even farther, and included the attempt to foist an episcopate upon them among the oppressive measures recently directed against them by the English government. These arguments, as such, are not new; but the weight of emphasis laid upon them, as compared with that attached to questions of a theological complexion, is new, and the popular interest is also new.

Cross, *ibid.*, p. 213.

2. The General Convention of the Associated Churches of Connecticut and the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, 1767-1775

Letter approved Oct. 6, 1768, and a copy ordered sent to the dissenting brethren in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, and in England:

The pastors of the Consociated Churches of Connecticut have agreed with the Synod of New York and Philadelphia to meet annually by Delegates in General Convention on the most catholic foundation; to give information of the public state of our united interests; to join our counsels and endeavors together for spreading and preserving the religious liberties of our Churches; to recommend, cultivate and preserve loyalty

and allegiance to the King's Majesty, and to keep up a correspondence through this united body and with our friends abroad. This we have apprehended to be our duty, especially in our present circumstances, not only that we might strengthen our influence in suppressing and discouraging any measures that might be fallen upon the people committed to our care; that would be inconsistent with our character as peaceable and loyal subjects, or detrimental to the public peace and tranquillity, but also that we might as faithful officers in the Church of Christ, watch over her rights and privileges to endeavor more effectually to prevent any attempts of any other denomination of Christians to oppress us. The late attempt of the Episcopalian Missionaries among us to introduce an American Episcopate have given a very general alarm to our Churches, who fled from the unmerciful rigor and persecution of Diocesan Bishops in our mother country to settle in an uncultivated wilderness; the recollection of the cruelties and hardships which our fathers suffered before this peaceful retreat was opened for us, fills our minds with an utter abhorrence of every species of ecclesiastical tyranny and persecution. And therefore we would guard with special care against admitting any just suspicion that we would suffer that to take place among ourselves which we so much condemn in others. We oppose not, therefore, the introduction of Diocesan Bishops into America from any apprehension that we have any exclusive privilege above others, or from any right we have to endeavor to prevent them from enjoying the same liberties with any other denomination of Christians in the Colonies. We oppose the scheme from very different motives and principles. Our fears would not be so much alarmed could any rational method be devised for sending over Bishops among us stripped of every degree of civil power, and confined in the exercise of their ecclesiastical function to their own societies; and could we have sufficient security that the British Parliament, that could send them over to us thus limited, to gain a peaceable settlement here, would never be induced by their complaints for the want of power to enlarge it at any future period. But it is very evident it is not that harmless and inoffensive Bishop which is designed for us, or the missionaries among us request; and therefore, we cannot but be apprehensive of danger from the proposed Episcopate, however plausible the scheme may be represented. . . .

To the Dissenting Committee.

Records of the Presbyterian Church, pp. 25-26 (in back of book).

3. Significance of the Question of Establishing Bishops in America as a Cause of the Revolution

Undoubtedly, there is something to be said in favor of the argument that the attempt to introduce bishops, and the opposition thereby excited, formed one of the causes of the Revolution. There can be no doubt that the opposition to bishops was based mainly on political grounds: this fact is indicated by the absence of any resistance to the establishment of an episcopate after the Revolution. Moreover, fear and hatred of the Church of England and all its appendages were existent in the colonies from their first foundation; and the fact that the majority of the colonists professed a religion hostile, or at least alien, to the Anglican establishment offered good ground for nourishing seeds of political discontent. But, admitting all this, it must be apparent to one who has followed carefully the course of events, religious and political, during the eighteenth century, that the strained relations which heralded the approach of the War of Independence strengthened the opposition to episcopacy, rather than that religious differences were a prime moving cause of political alienation. The religious controversies, accentuated and drawn into more public prominence, though not first called into being, by the existing political situation, had a reactionary effect, in that, once in full swing, they contributed, in combination with other causes, to embitter the minds of the patriots and thus to accelerate the impending crisis.

Cross, *The Anglican Episcopate and the American Colonies*, pp. 270-2.

II. CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY INSEPARABLE

Meanwhile, during the quarter of a century immediately preceding the Revolution, a discussion of the whole subject of religious rights, important for its effect upon the popular mind, as well as for the ability displayed in its prosecution, was conducted through public press by the leading men of the Presbyterian Church in New York. Three of these were eminent lawyers. A fourth was the young pastor of the Wall Street Church, Alexander Cumming, whose spirited appeals and cogent arguments contributed not a little to the force and weight of the pamphlet and newspaper publications of the day. But the names of his parishioners, William Smith, William Livingston, John Morin Scott, are better known in connection with this debate. The battle for religious liberty was well fought, at a time when the great struggle for civil freedom was beginning, by "the Presbyterian lawyers" of New York; and not only for their own religious communion, but equally for other Christian bodies. It is certainly to the credit of these advocates of the rights of conscience, that representing a Church which in Great Britain was a Church by law established—one of "the two Communions" in alliance with the State, the National Church of Scotland—they pleaded the common cause of the Protestant denominations not conforming to the Church of England. By the prominent part they took in this controversy, as well as by their activity in the political discussions of the day, Livingston and his associates incurred suspicion and odium as dangerous men. But their arguments and appeals carried the judgment and sympathies of the people. The partisans of a Church Establishment were no match for the men who stood forth in defence of the rights of conscience and the freedom of the land from an oppressive ecclesiastical rule. "The Presbyterians in America," wrote one of their opponents in 1766, "have ever been an encroaching and restless sect, and there is great reason to think they ever will be so. Since my first settling in this City, which is now upwards of seventeen years, they have at times been extremely troublesome, and have exerted all their cunning and interest to prevent the increase and prosperity of the Established Church." "The Province is unhappily ruled," wrote another, "by a set of lawyers of that persuasion who take every opportunity of doing the Church all the mischief in their power." (Correspondence of G. P. S.)

Charles W. Baird, *Civil Status of the Presbyterians in the Province of New York* (New York, 1879), pp. 620-621.

III. OFFICIAL ACTION OF THE SYNOD OF NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA WITH THE SERIES OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTS FROM 1765 TO 1774

1. Stamp Act

An overture was made by Dr. Alison, that an address should be made to our Sovereign, on the joyful occasion of the repeal of the Stamp Act, and thereby a confirmation of our liberties, at the same time proposing the copy of such an address for examination; which was read and approved by the Synod. (May 29, 1766.)

Records of the Presbyterian Church, p. 360.

A pastoral letter was proposed, examined, and approved, and ordered to be printed immediately, and to be dispersed among all our societies, which is as follows:

"Dearly Beloved:—We think it our indispensable duty, not only in our particular charges, but in this united and more public capacity, to direct you to some suitable reflections upon the late remarkable and merciful steps of Divine Providence, and to inculcate a becoming improvement of an event, the most interesting and important to

the people of this continent. For not only in the word of God should we attend to his Divine will, but also mark his hand in that Providence by which he directs the course of human affairs with invariable wisdom and paternal goodness.

"The faithless French, and their savage allies, were lately the rod of Divine displeasure for our many provocations. Under the calamities of war, and the wasting ravages of Indian cruelty, we were repeatedly brought to approach the throne of grace, with solemn fasting and prayer; and thereby openly professed our resolution to forsake the ways of sin, and turn unto the Lord. But, alas! we rendered not to God according to the multitude of his tender mercies; for no sooner was the rod removed, and the blessings of peace restored, but we became more vain and dissolute than before.

"The Almighty thus provoked, permitted counsels of the most pernicious tendency, both to Great Britain and her colonies. The imposition of unusual taxes, a severe restriction of our trade, and an almost total stagnation of business, threatened us with inevitable ruin. A long suspense, whether we should be deprived of, or restored to, the peaceable enjoyment of the inestimable privilege of English liberty, filled every breast with the most painful anxiety. A gloomy cloud thickened over our heads, ready to burst upon us in a desolating storm. Had our gracious Sovereign, the present ministry, and the British Parliament been less wise, just, and good; had they, instead of yielding to a spirit of moderation, unhappily recurred to force, we shudder at the very thoughts of the consequences. We cannot look down the precipice on the brink of which we stood, without horror. We were not without reason apprehensive that the tumultuous outrages, which in some places attended a determined opposition to the disrelished statute, might provoke the resentment of the British legislature. . . .

"While we thus call upon you to fear God, you will not forget to honour your king, and pay a due submission to his august parliament. Let this fresh instance of royal clemency increase the ardour of your affection to the person, family, and government, of our rightful and gracious sovereign. This you will manifest by a cheerful and ready obedience to civil authority. A spirit of liberty is highly laudable when under proper regulations, but we hope you will carefully distinguish between liberty and licentiousness.

"We most earnestly recommend it to you to encourage and strengthen the hands of government, to demonstrate on every proper occasion your undissembled love for your mother country, and your attachment to her true interest, so inseparably connected with our own.

"That thus you may become wise and good, as well as free and happy, and that while you enjoy liberty, civil and religious, you may not be the servants of sin and Satan, is the fervent prayer of those who watch for your souls, as men who must give an account.

"Signed by order, Elihu Spencer, moderator. "*Presbyterian Church, at New York, May 30th, 1766.*"

Records of the Presbyterian Church, pp. 362-363.

2. Period of Taxation under Townshend and North, 1767-1774

The Synod taking into their serious consideration the prevalence of irreligion and immorality, the lamentable decay of vital piety, and the threatening aspect of our public affairs, appoint the last Thursday of June to be observed as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. Should this day be found inconvenient for any of our ministers, they are allowed to fix on any other day that may suit them better. (May 24, 1769.)

Records of the Presbyterian Church, p. 398.

An overture was made that the general fast be observed in all our bounds in consideration of the aspect which matters, both civil and religious, bear. The overture was cheerfully accepted, and the Synod earnestly recommend it to the several ministers and congregations under their care, to spend the third Thursday in June in fasting and prayer: excepting those Presbyteries who may have lately observed a fast for the same purpose. (May 22, 1771.)

Records of the Presbyterian Church, p. 420.

The Synod taking into their serious consideration the dark and threatening aspect of our public affairs, both civil and religious, as loudly calling for deep humiliation before God, and earnest application to the throne of grace, do agree to observe the third Thursday of June next, as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, to implore the Divine compassion, that it may please God in his great mercy to avert the calamities which, on account of our manifold provocations, we have great reason to fear. (May 26, 1774.)

Records of the Presbyterian Church, p. 460.

IV. THE OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION

1. Action of the Synod after Lexington and Concord

The Synod considering the present alarming state of public affairs, do unanimously judge it their duty to call all the congregations under their care to solemn fasting, humiliation, and prayer, and for this purpose appoint the last Thursday of June next to be carefully and religiously observed. But as the Continental Congress are now sitting, who may probably appoint a fast for the same purpose, the Synod, from respect to that august body, and for the greater harmony with all other denominations, and for the greater public order, if the Congress shall appoint a day not above four weeks distant from the said last Thursday of June, order that the congregations belonging to this Synod do keep the day appointed by the Congress, in obedience to this resolution; and if they appoint a day more distant, the Synod order both to be observed by all our communion. The Synod also earnestly recommend it to all the congregations under their care to spend the afternoon of the last Thursday in every month in public solemn prayer to God, during the continuance of our present troubles. (May 19, 1775.)

Records of the Presbyterian Church, pp. 464-465.

2. "A Pastoral Letter," May 20, 1775:

"Very dear Brethren—The Synod of New York and Philadelphia being met at a time when public affairs wear so threatening an aspect, and when (unless God in his sovereign Providence speedily prevent it) all the horrors of a civil war throughout this great Continent are to be apprehended, were of opinion, that they could not discharge their duty to the numerous congregations under their care, without addressing them at this important crisis. . . .

"The Synod cannot help thinking that this is a proper time for pressing all of every rank, seriously to consider the things that belong to their eternal peace. Hostilities, long feared, have now taken place; the sword has been drawn in one province, and the whole continent, with hardly any exception, seem determined to defend their rights by force of arms. If, at the same time, the British ministry shall continue to enforce their claims by violence, a lasting and bloody contest must be expected. Surely, then, it becomes those who have taken up arms, and profess a willingness to hazard their lives in the cause of liberty, to be prepared for death, which to many must be certain, and to every one is a possible or probable event.

"We have long seen with concern, the circumstances which occasioned, and the gradual increase of this unhappy difference. As ministers of the gospel of peace, we have ardently wished that it could, and often hoped that it would have been more early accommodated. It is well known to you, (otherwise it would be imprudent indeed thus publicly to profess), that we have not been instrumental in inflaming the minds of the people, or urging them to acts of violence and disorder. Perhaps no instance can be given on so interesting a subject, in which political sentiments have been so long and so fully kept from the pulpit, and even malice itself has not charged us with labouring from the press; but things are now come to such a state, that as we do not wish to conceal our opinions as men and citizens, so the relation we stand in to you seemed to make the present improvement of it to your spiritual benefit, an indispensable duty. . . .

"After this exhortation, which we thought ourselves called upon to give you at this time, on your great interest, the one thing needful, we shall take the liberty to offer a few advices to the societies under our charge, as to their public and general conduct; and,

"First. In carrying on this important struggle, let every opportunity be taken to express your attachment and respect to our sovereign King George, and to the revolution principles by which his august family was seated on the British throne. We recommend, indeed, not only allegiance to him from duty and principle, as the first magistrate of the empire, but esteem and reverence for the person of the prince, who has merited well of his subjects on many accounts, and who has probably been misled into the late and present measures by those about him; neither have we any doubt that they themselves have been in a great degree deceived by false information from interested persons residing in America. It gives us the greatest pleasure to say, from our own certain knowledge of all belonging to our communion, and from the best means of information, of the far greatest part of all denominations in this country, that the present opposition to the measures of administration does not in the least arise from disaffection to the king, or a desire of separation from the parent state. We are happy in being able with truth to affirm, that no part of America would either have approved or permitted such insults as have been offered to the sovereign in Great Britain. We exhort you, therefore, to continue in the same disposition, and not to suffer oppression, or injury itself, easily to provoke you to any thing which may seem to betray contrary sentiments: let it ever appear, that you only desire the preservation and security of those rights which belong to you as freemen and Britons, and that reconciliation upon these terms is your most ardent desire.

"Secondly. Be careful to maintain the union which at present subsists through all the colonies; nothing can be more manifest than that the success of every measure depends on its being inviolably preserved, and therefore, we hope that you will leave nothing undone which can promote that end. In particular, as the Continental Congress, now sitting at Philadelphia, consists of delegates chosen in the most free and unbiased manner, by the body of the people, let them not only be treated with respect, and encouraged in their difficult service—not only let your prayers be offered up to God for his direction in their proceedings—but adhere firmly to their resolutions; and let it be seen that they are able to bring out the whole strength of this vast country to carry them into execution. We would also advise for the same purpose, that a spirit of candour, charity, and mutual esteem, be preserved and promoted towards those of different religious denominations. Persons of probity and principle of every profession, should be united together as servants of the same master, and the experience of our happy concord hitherto in a state of liberty should engage all to unite in support of the common interest; for there is no example in history, in which civil liberty was destroyed, and the rights of conscience preserved entire. . . .

"Fifthly. We think it of importance, at this time, to recommend to all of every rank, but especially to those who may be called to action, a spirit of humanity and mercy. Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood. It is impossible to appeal to the sword without being exposed to many scenes of cruelty and slaughter; but it is often observed, that civil wars are carried on with a rancour and spirit of revenge much greater than those between independent States. The injuries received, or supposed, in civil wars, wound more deeply than those of foreign enemies, it is therefore the more necessary to guard against this abuse, and recommend that meekness and gentleness of spirit, which is the noblest attendant on true valour. That man will fight most bravely, who never fights till it is necessary, and who ceases to fight as soon as the necessity is over.

"Lastly. We would recommend to all the societies under our care, not to content themselves with attending devoutly on general fasts, but to continue habitually in the exercise of prayer, and to have frequent occasional voluntary meetings for solemn intercession with God on the important trial. Those who are immediately exposed to danger need your sympathy; and we learn from the Scriptures, that fervency and importunity are the very characters of that prayer of the righteous man that availeth much.

"We conclude with our most earnest prayer, that the God of heaven may bless you in your temporal and spiritual concerns, and that the present unnatural dispute may be speedily terminated by an equitable and lasting settlement on constitutional principles.

"Signed in the name, presence, and by appointment of the Synod.

BENJAMIN HAIT, Moderator.

"*New York, May* 22d, 1775."

Records of the Presbyterian Church, pp. 466-469.

3. Presbyterians and the Revolution

As noted earlier, the Presbyterians in the colonies at the opening of the Revolution were largely Scotch-Irish and represented the most recent immigration, that from North Ireland, and were still burning with hostility to England for the wrongs which had caused their migration. Scotch-Irish settlements everywhere throughout the colonies were strong supporters of the cause of liberty. The famous Mecklenburg Resolves of May 31, 1775, came from the Scotch-Irish of Western North Carolina while the battle of King's Mountain was won on October 7, 1780, by bands of Scotch-Irish frontiersmen. Joseph Galloway, a leading loyalist of Pennsylvania, stated before a committee of Parliament in 1779 that about one-half of the American army was made up of Irish, while five years before he had stated that the chief opponents of the British government were "Congregationalists, Presbyterians and smugglers."

W. W. Sweet, *Story of Religions in America*, p. 259.

4. Francis Alison on Freedom

The sum of civil power in all states is ye same; & persons vested with ye supreme power have it in ye extent which ye fundamental laws have given it—in some states certain rights of ye people are exempted from ye power of any prince or political council but in others there is no such exemptions.—Ye end of all civil power is ye publick happiness, & any power not conducive to this is unjust & ye people who gave it may justly abolish it. Nor can any thing be more insolent than for rulers to contend for oppressive power for their own advantage when they were entrusted with all their power only for ye good of ye people—

While ye publick interests are tolerably secured and consulted it is unjustifiable in any people to have recourse to cilvil [civil] wars & force for lighter causes: but when ye publick liberty & safety cannot be otherwise secured it is lawful and honourable to make strong efforts for a change of government.

The divine right of Governors in a dream of court flatterers, in one sense every right is divine yt is constituted by ye Law of God & nature ye rights of ye people are divine as well as those of Princes. Nay more divine as princes were constituted for ye good of ye people. A good subject should bear many ——— [illegible] injuries rather than take arms against a prince who was in ye main good and useful to ye state, but if ye attempt is made against him for a precedent to hurt ye community then the Prince evidences his disregard to ye publick welfare & forfeits ye power committed to him. . . .

The highest honor & defference [sic] is due to good rulers of any kind; they should be supported by ye lives & fortune of their subjects against Rebels & forreign [sic] Enemies. Nor are subjects excused from their duty by lighter faults or mistakes of governors, for men good in ye main may err & mistake, but if after all efforts such Rulers are conquerd [sic] & dethroned & there is no probable hopes of their recovering their rights, it is their duty in such cases to quit their Claim of obedience, for when it becomes impossible for one side to perform its part, ye other is freed from his obligation. The people after all efforts are useless may submit to ye Conqueror or seek their safety Elsewhere.

Francis Alison, "Of the rights of ye Supreame power, & ye methods of acquiring it" (n.d.). Manuscript in the Presbyterian Historical Society.

5. Westmoreland County Resolutions, May 16, 1775

With the westward expansion in colonial Pennsylvania the western part of the colony became populated with a large number of Presbyterians and of those who had been brought under Presbyterian influence. So it is that the following resolutions, although not a declaration of independence, stand as an evidence of the responsiveness of these people to the plight to which the people of Massachusetts were subjected at Lexington and Concord.

Resolved, unanimously, That the Parliament of Great Britain by several late acts have declared the inhabitants of Massachusetts Bay to be in rebellion, and the ministry, by endeavoring to enforce those acts, have attempted to reduce the said inhabitants to a more wretched state of slavery than ever before existed in any state or country. Not content with violating their constitutional and chartered privileges, they would strip them of the rights of humanity, exposing lives to the wanton and unpunishable spirit of a licentious soldiery, and depriving them of the very means of subsistence.

Resolved, unanimously, That there is no reason to doubt but the same system of tyranny and oppression will (should it meet with success in the Massachusetts Bay) be extended to every other part of America. It is therefore become the indispensable duty of every American, of every man who has any public virtue or love for his country, or any bowels for posterity, by every means which God has put in his power, to resist and oppose the execution of it; that for us, we will be ready to oppose it with our lives and fortunes. And the better to enable us to accomplish it, we will immediately form ourselves into a military body to consist of companies to be made up out of the several townships under the following association, Which is to be the Association of Westmoreland County.

Possessed with the most unshaken loyalty to His Majesty King George III., whom we acknowledge to be our lawful and rightful king, and who we wish may long be the beloved sovereign of a free and happy people throughout the whole British empire, we declare to the world that we do not mean to deviate from the loyalty which we hold it to be our bounden duty to observe; but animated by the love of liberty, it is no less our duty to maintain and defend our just rights (which with sorrow we have seen of late wantonly violated in many instances by a wicked ministry and a corrupt parliament) and transmit them entire to our posterity, for which purpose we do agree and associate ourselves together:

. . . *Fifth.* That when the British parliament shall have repealed their late obnoxious statutes, and shall have receded from their claim to tax us and make laws for us in every instance, or when some general plan of union and reconstruction has been formed and accepted by America, this our association shall be dissolved; but till then it shall remain in full force, and to the observation of it we bind ourselves by everything dear and sacred amongst men. No licensed murder! No famine introduced by law!

Quoted by W. P. Breed, D.D., *Presbyterians and the Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1906), pp. 58-63.

6. Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence

Although a claim has been made that the Mecklenburg Declaration was drawn up as early as May 20, 1775, in an article appearing in the *Raleigh Register and North Carolina Gazette* of April 30, 1819, the earliest declaration of which there is recorded action was taken by a Mecklenburg County Convention on May 31, 1775, in an area that was inhabited by a strong Scotch-Irish Presbyterian element.

Charlotte-Town, Mecklenburg County, May 31, 1775.

This day the Committee of this county met, and passed the following Resolves:

WHEREAS by an Address presented to his Majesty by both Houses of Parliament, in February last, the American colonies are declared to be in a state of actual rebellion, we conceive, that all laws and commissions confirmed by, or derived from the authority of the King or Parliament, are annulled and vacated, and the former civil constitution of these colonies, for the present, wholly suspended. To provide, in some degree, for the exigencies of this county, in the present alarming period, we deem it proper and necessary to pass the following Resolves, viz.

I. That all commissions, civil and military, heretofore granted by the Crown, to be exercised in these colonies, are null and void, and the constitution of each particular colony wholly suspended.

II. That the Provincial Congress of each province, under the direction of the great Continental Congress, is invested with all legislative and executive powers within their respective provinces; and that no other legislative or executive power, does or can exist, at this time, in any of these colonies. . . .

Signed by order of the Committee,

EPH. BREVARD, Clerk of the Committee.

Quoted by William Henry Hoyt, *The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence* (New York and London, 1907), pp. 22-26.

7. Declaration of Independence (1776)

How far one can go in setting forth claims in regard to the influence of Presbyterians in supporting the Declaration of Independence, remains an open question. Many of the men who took an active part in the political events of this period were either members of Presbyterian churches, or had been brought directly under Presbyterian influences by studying in academies conducted by Presbyterian ministers or in the College of New Jersey at Princeton.

Of the signers of the Declaration of Independence such men as Thomas McKean, Benjamin Rush, James Smith, and George Read had studied in academies conducted by Presbyterian ministers. Richard Stockton was a member of the First Presbyterian Church, Princeton, New Jersey; Abraham Clark was a member of the congregation of the Rev. James Caldwell, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth, New Jersey, who was known as "the Rebel High Priest," and "the Fighting Chaplain." James Wilson was a trustee of the First Presbyterian Church, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

In the front ranks of the political arena was the Reverend John Witherspoon, who, as president of the College of New Jersey, prepared some of America's most distinguished patriots and legislators and "was the first of that long line of American college presidents who illustrated in a high degree the possibilities of college service for political leadership." He signed the Declaration of Independence, served in the Provincial Assembly of New Jersey, was a member of the Continental Congress and of the State Assembly of 1789. Although tradition holds that Witherspoon, at a moment when the issue of independence seemed to be hanging in the balance, gave a stirring speech for the adoption of the resolutions, the evidence to substantiate this claim is lacking. (See Rev. Louis F. Benson, D.D., "What Did Doctor Witherspoon Say?", *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, VIII, pp. 241-257.) The extent of his influence from the pulpit appears in his sermon: "The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men. A Sermon, Preached at Princeton, on the 17th of May, 1776. Being the General Fast appointed by the Congress through the United Colonies. Dedicated to the Hon. John Hancock, Esq., President of the Congress of the United States of America. . . ." (*The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon . . .*, II, pp. 407-435):

> I am sensible, my brethren, that the time and occasion of this psalm [Psalm lxxvi.], may seem to be in one respect ill suited to the interesting circumstances of this country at present. It was composed after the victory was obtained; whereas we are now but putting on the harness, and entering upon an important contest, the length of which it is impossible to foresee, and the issue of which it will perhaps be thought presumption to foretell. But as the truth, with respect to God's moral government, is the same and unchangeable; as the issue, in the case of Sennacherib's invasion, did but lead the prophet to acknowledge it; our duty and interest conspire in calling upon us to improve it. And I have chosen to insist upon it on this day of solemn humiliation, as it will probably help us to a clear and explicit view of what should be

the chief subject of our prayers and endeavors, as well as the great object of our hope and trust, in our present situation. . . .

If your cause is just—you may look with confidence to the Lord and intreat him to plead it as his own. You are all my witnesses, that this is the first time of my introducing any political subject into the pulpit. At this season, however, it is not only lawful but necessary, and I willingly embrace the opportunity of declaring my opinion without any hesitation, that the cause in which America is now in arms, is the cause of justice, of liberty, and of human nature. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, I am satisfied that the confederacy of the colonies, has not been the effect of pride, resentment, or sedition, but of a deep and general conviction, that our civil and religious liberties, and consequently in a great measure the temporal and eternal happiness of us and our posterity depended on the issue.

The knowledge of God and his truths have from the beginning of the world been chiefly, if not entirely confined to these parts of the earth, where some degree of liberty and political justice were to be seen, and great were the difficulties which they had to struggle from the imperfection of human society, and the unjust decisions of usurped authority. There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage.

You shall not, my brethren, hear from me in the pulpit, what you have never heard from me in conversation, I mean railing at the king personally, or even his ministers and the parliament, and people of Britain, as so many barbarous savages. Many of their actions have probably been worse than their intentions. That they should desire unlimited dominion if they can obtain or preserve it, is neither new nor wonderful. I do not refuse submission to their unjust claims, because they are corrupt or profligate, although probably many of them are so, but because they are men, and therefore liable to all the selfish bias inseparable from human nature. I call this claim unjust of making laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever, because they are separated from us, independent of us, and have an interest in opposing us. Would any man who could prevent it, give up his estate, person, and family, to the disposal of his neighbor, although he had liberty to chuse the wisest and best master? Surely not. This is the true and proper hinge of the controversy between Great-Britain and America. It is however to be added, that such is their distance from us, that a wise and prudent administration of our affairs is as impossible as the claim of authority is unjust. Such is and must be their ignorance of the state of things here, so much time must elapse before an error can be seen and remedied, and so much injustice and partiality must be expected from the arts and misrepresentations of interested persons, that for these colonies to depend wholly upon the legislature of Great-Britain, would be like many other oppressive connexions, injury to the master, and ruin to the slave.

. . . Upon the whole, I beseech you to make a wise improvement of the present threatening aspect of public affairs, and to remember that your duty to God, to your country, to your families, and to yourselves, is the same. True religion is nothing else but an inward temper and outward conduct suited to your state and circumstances in providence at any time. And as peace with God and conformity to him, adds to the sweetness of created comforts while we possess them, so in times of difficulty and trial, it is in the man of piety and inward principle that we may expect to find the uncorrupted patriot, the useful citizen, and the invincible soldier.—God grant that in America true religion and civil liberty may be inseparable, and that the unjust attempts to destroy the one, may in the issue tend to the support and establishment of both.

Excerpts from "The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men," *The Works of The Rev. John Witherspoon . . .* (1800), II, pp. 407-435.

8. Memorial of the Presbytery of Hanover to the Virginia Assembly, October 24, 1776

The Memorial of the Presbytery of Hanover humbly represents,—That your memorialists are governed by the same sentiments which have inspired the United States of America; and are determined that nothing in our power and influence shall be wanting to give success to their common cause. We would also represent, that dissenters from the church of England, in this country, have ever been desirous to conduct themselves as peaceable members of civil government, for which reason they have hitherto submitted to several ecclesiastical burdens, and restrictions, that are inconsistent with equal liberty. But now when the many and grievous oppressions of our mother country, have laid this continent under the necessity of casting off the yoke of tyranny, and of forming independent governments upon equitable and liberal foundations, we flatter ourselves that we shall be freed from all the incumbrances which a spirit of domination, prejudice, or bigotry, hath interwoven with most other political systems. This we are the more strongly encouraged to expect, by the Declaration of Rights, so universally applauded for that dignity, firmness and precision with which it delineates and asserts the privileges of society, and the prerogatives of human nature; and which we embrace as the *magna charta* of our commonwealth, that can never be violated without endangering the grand superstructure, it was destined to sustain. Therefore we rely upon this *Declaration*, as well as the justice of our honourable Legislature, to secure us the *free exercise of religion according to the dictates of our consciences*: and we should fall short in our duty to ourselves, and the many and numerous congregations under our care, were we, upon this occasion, to neglect laying before you a state of the religious grievances under which we have hitherto laboured; that they no longer may be continued in our present form of government.

It is well known, that in the frontier counties, which are justly supposed to contain a fifth part of the inhabitants of Virginia, the dissenters have borne the heavy burdens of purchasing glebes, building churches, and supporting the established clergy, where there are very few Episcopalians, either to assist in bearing the expense, or to reap the advantage; and that throughout the other parts of the country, there are also many thousands of zealous friends and defenders of our State, who, besides the invidious, and disadvantageous restrictions to which they have been subjected, annually pay large taxes to support an establishment, from which their consciences and principles oblige them to dissent: all of which are confessedly so many violations of their natural rights; and in their consequences, a restraint upon freedom of inquiry, and private judgment.

In this enlightened age, and in a land where all, of every denomination are united in the most strenuous efforts to be free, we hope and expect that our representatives will cheerfully concur in removing every species of religious, as well as civil bondage. Certain it is, that every argument for civil liberty, gains additional strength when applied to liberty in the concerns of religion; and there is no argument in favour of establishing the Christian religion, but what may be pleaded, with equal propriety, for establishing the tenets of Mahomed by those who believe the Alcoran: or if this be not true, it is at least impossible for the magistrate to adjudge the right of preference among the various sects that profess the Christian faith, without erecting a chair of infallibility, which would lead us back to the church of Rome. . . .

Therefore we *ask no ecclesiastical establishments for ourselves;* neither can we approve of them when granted to others. This indeed would be giving exclusive or separate emoluments or privileges to one set (or sect) of men, without any special public services to the common reproach and injury of every other denomination. And for the reasons recited we are induced earnestly to entreat, that all laws now in force in this commonwealth, which countenance religious domination, may be speedily repealed—

that all, of every religious sect, may be protected in the full exercise of their several modes of worship; and exempted from all taxes for the support of any church whatsoever, further than what may be agreeable to their own private choice, or voluntary obligation. This being done, all partial and invidious distinctions will be abolished, to the great honour and interest of the State; and every one be left to stand or fall according to merit, which can never be the case, so long as one denomination is established in preference to others.

That the great Sovereign of the Universe may inspire you with unanimity, wisdom and resolution; and bring you to a just determination on all the important concerns before you, is the fervent prayer of your memorialists.

Signed by order of the Presbytery.

JOHN TODD, Moderator.
CALEB WALLACE, P. Clerk.

William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical* (Philadelphia, 1850), pp. 323-324.

9. Presbyterians in the Conflict

George Duffield, pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, served not only as one of the chaplains of the Continental Congress but also as chaplain in the army around New York in the summer of 1776. The great exponent of freedom, John Adams, spoke of him in the following manner.

Philadelphia, 11 June, 1775

I have been this morning to hear Mr. Duffield, a preacher in this city, whose principles, prayers, and sermons more nearly resemble those of our New England clergy than any that I have heard. His discourse was a kind of exposition on the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. America was the wilderness, and the solitary place, and he said it would be glad, "rejoice and blossom as the rose." He labored "to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees." He "said to them that were of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not. Behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you," "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, but the redeemed shall walk there," etc. He applied the whole prophecy to this country, and gave us as animating an entertainment as I ever heard. He filled and swelled the bosom of every hearer. I hope you have received a letter, in which I inclosed you a pastoral letter from the synod of New York and Philadelphia; by this you will see that the clergy this way are but now beginning to engage in politics, and they engage with a fervor that will produce wonderful effects.

Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution. Ed. by Charles Francis Adams (New York, 1876), p. 65.

Philadelphia, 30 July, 1775

. . . This day I have heard my parish priest, Mr. Duffield, from 2 Chronicles xv.1,2. This gentleman never fails to adapt his discourse to the times. He pressed upon his audience the necessity of the piety and virtue, in the present times of adversity, and held up to their view the army before Boston as an example. He understood, he said, that the voice of the swearer was scarcely heard; that the Sabbath was well observed, and all immoralities discountenanced. No doubt there were vicious individuals, but the general character was good. I hope this good man's information is true, and that this will become more and more the true character of that camp. You may well suppose that this language was exceedingly pleasing to me.

Familiar Letters of John Adams. . . . p. 90.

The ministers who served as chaplains during the Revolution were: Dr. John Rodgers, of New York, in Heath's brigade; James Caldwell, of Elizabethtown, of the New Jersey brigade; Alexander McWhorter, of Knox's brigade; James F. Armstrong, of the Second Maryland brigade; Adam Boyd, of the North Carolina brigade; Daniel McCalla, of the expedition to Canada. Jacob Green was a member of the congress of New Jersey; Henry Patillo, of North Carolina; William Tennent, of South Carolina; John Murray of Massachusetts; David Caldwell, of the North Carolina constitutional convention of 1776; Abraham Kettletas, of the New York convention; and James Hall, of North Carolina, both captain of a cavalry company and chaplain of a regiment.

(Briggs, *American Presbyterianism*, p. 352.)

The battles of the "Cowpens", of "King's Mountain"—and also the severe skirmish known as "Huck's Defeat", are among the most celebrated in this State, as giving a turning point to the contest of the Revolution. General Morgan, who commanded at the Cowpens, was a Presbyterian elder, and lived and died in the communion of the church. General Pickens, who made all the arrangements for the battle, was also a Presbyterian elder. And nearly all under their command were Presbyterians. In the battle of King's Mountain, Colonel Campbell, Colonel James Williams, (who fell in action), Colonel Cleaveland, Colonel Shelby, and Colonel Sevier, were all Presbyterian elders; and the body of their troops were collected from Presbyterian settlements. At Huck's Defeat, in York, Colonel Bratton and Major Dickson were both elders of the Presbyterian Church. Major Samuel Morrow, who was with Colonel Sumpter, in four engagements, and at King's Mountain, Blackstock, and other battles, and whose home was in the army, till the termination of hostilities, was for about fifty years, a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church.

Thomas Smyth, D.D., *Presbyterianism, the Revolution, the Declaration, and the Constitution* (pamphlet), pp. 32-33.

In Pennsylvania were John Carmichael, who before the military on several occasions preached by request a sermon on "the lawfulness of self-defence," which exerted a great influence; John Craighead, who raised a company from the members of his congregation, serving as captain and chaplain, and who is said to have "fought and preached alternately"; Dr. James Latta, who to encourage his people shouldered his knapsack and accompanied them on their campaign; Dr. Robert Davidson, who by his patriotic sermons before military companies inspired the soldiers with courage and fortitude; Dr. William Linn, chaplain, who was present at the taking of Fort Washington; Dr. Robert Cooper, who "bore arms, marched and countermarched through the Jerseys on foot so long as he was able"; John Elder, a colonel in the colonial service; John Steele, who served as captain, "and led the advance company of nine hundred men in their march to the seat of war, and often preached with his gun standing by his side"; John Rosbrugh, first a private soldier, then a chaplain, and who was killed in cold blood by the Hessians; Dr. John King, eminent for his patriotic zeal doing duty as a chaplain, and by his many addresses increasing the devotion of the people to their country's cause.

J. G. Craighead, D.D., *Scotch and Irish Seeds in American Soil* (Philadelphia, 1878), pp. 336-337.

The limitation of space does not permit the citation of all those Presbyterians who rose in the defense of their rights. But in whatever colony Presbyterians were located their influence in the cause of liberty was so cogent that the British recognized it as a dominant force. The Rev. Charles Inglis, rector of Trinity Church, New York, wrote on October 31, 1776, as follows:

These violences have been gradually increasing ever since; and this with the delay of sending over succours, and the King's troops totally abandoning this province, reduced the friends of government here to a most disagreeable and dangerous situation, particularly the Clergy, who were viewed with peculiar envy and malignity by the disaffected; for, although civil liberty was the ostensible object the bait that was flung out to catch the populace at large and engage them in the rebellion, yet it is now past all doubt that an abolition of the Church of England was one of the principal springs of the dissenting leaders' conduct; and hence the unanimity of dissenters in this business. Their universal defection from government, emancipating themselves from the jurisdiction of Great Britain, and becoming independent, was a necessary step towards this grand object. I have it from good authority that the Presbyterian ministers, at a synod where most of them in the middle colonies were collected, passed a resolve to support the continental congress in all their measures. This and this only can account for the uniformity of their conduct; for I do not know one of them, nor have I been able, after strict inquiry, to hear of any, who did not, by preaching and every effort in their power, promote all the measures of the congress, however extravagant.

The Documentary History of the State of New York (Albany, 1850), III, 1050-1051.

Cousin America, has run off with a Presbyterian Parson.

Horace Walpole.

Presbyterianism is really at the bottom of this whole Conspiracy, has supplied it with Vigor, and will never rest, till something is decided upon it.

Ambrose Serle to the Earl of Dartmouth, 25 April, 1777.

10. A Pastoral Letter, 1783

A pastoral letter, prepared by a committee made up of John Witherspoon, Elihu Spencer, and Samuel Smith, was approved by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, and an order for its printing passed on May 24, 1783 (*Records of the Presbyterian Church,* pp. 499, 500). A section of the letter is as follows:

We cannot help congratulating you on the general and almost universal attachment of the Presbyterian body to the cause of liberty and the rights of mankind. This has been visible in their conduct, and has been confessed by the complaints and resentment of the common enemy. Such a circumstance ought not only to afford us satisfaction on the review, as bringing credit to the body in general, but to increase our gratitude to God, for the happy issue of the war. Had it been unsuccessful, we must have drunk deeply of the cup of suffering. Our burnt and wasted churches, and our plundered dwellings, in such places as fell under the power of our adversaries, are but an earnest of what we must have suffered, had they finally prevailed. The Synod, therefore, request you to render thanks to Almighty God, for all his mercies, spiritual and temporal, and in a particular manner for establishing the Independence of the United States of America.

Quoted by Briggs, *American Presbyterianism,* p. 357.

V. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

When the part that Presbyterians played in the formation of the Constitution of the United States is considered, it is far more difficult specifically to show a tangible influence at work. The period following the Revolution was one of disorder and unrest. The heavy indebtedness as a result of the war, the depreciation of currency, the restlessness of the frontier, the instability of commercial relations, disorder within the states, "a reckless disregard of political obligations," and a government which under the Articles of Confederation was ineffective to cope with the issues, showed the need for a stronger centralized government. How early the need for a centralized government was recognized by various individuals and groups is an open question. But a recognition of this need made an early appearance among Presbyterians. One writer states: "We cannot but repeat that the centralized governing body of the Presbyterian Church in America during the colonial period, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, was the most influential of all colonial institutions towards the development of a centralized national conscience" (Humphrey, *Nationalism and Religion in America*, p. 440). One thing is certain, that, whereas plans for political union had failed among the colonists, the Presbyterian Church had succeeded in partially uniting in a religious union the Presbyterians of the various colonies, although there were some who remained apart from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia.

If Alexander Hamilton bemoaned the absence of a "solid coercive union" as early as September 1780, and James Madison brought in a report from a committee in March 1781, which pointed out the need for coercive power, John Witherspoon, as a member of the Continental Congress, proposed on February 3, 1781, to bestow upon Congress authority to regulate commerce and to levy duties upon imports. Although Congress agreed that it must have the power to levy a five per cent duty on imports, the measure did not become law because the votes of all of the thirteen states were necessary. In a speech before Congress on the Confederation he stated:

> The absolute necessity of union, to the vigor and success of those measures on which we are already entered, is felt and confessed by every one of us, without exception; so far, indeed, that those who have expressed their fears or suspicions of the existing confederacy proving abortive, have yet agreed in saying that there must and shall be a confederacy for the purposes of, and till the finishing of this war. So far is well; and so far it is pleasing to hear them express their sentiments. But I intreat gentlemen calmly to consider how far the giving up all hopes of a lasting confederacy among these states, for their future security and improvement, will have an effect upon the stability and efficacy of even the temporary confederacy, which all acknowledge to be necessary? I am fully persuaded, that when it ceases to be generally known, that the delegates of the provinces consider a lasting union as impracticable, it will greatly derange the minds of the people, and weaken their hands in defence of their country, which they have now undertaken with so much alacrity and spirit. I confess it would to me greatly diminish the glory and importance of the struggle, whether considered as for the rights of mankind in general, or for the prosperity and happiness of this continent in future times.
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> *The Miscellaneous Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D., LL.D. . . .* (Philadelphia, 1803), pp. 253-254.

We ought carefully to manifest our joy in God, and gratitude to him, on this occasion, by a wise improvement of the great things he has done for us,—He has, by the revolution we this day celebrate, put all the blessings of liberty, civil and religious, within our reach. Perhaps there never was a nation, that had the fair opportunity of becoming the happiest people upon earth, that we now have. But *misery*, as well as *happiness*, lies before us, (and both in the extreme) unless the present state of things is wisely improved by us. They are both at our option. And Heaven and earth are looking with eager expectation, to see which we shall choose. The eyes of those Ministers of Providence, the angels of God, who have so often aided us in this glorious struggle, for liberty; the eyes of the nations of the earth, and particularly the eyes of all Europe are upon these States, to see what use they will make of the great things God has done for us. How dignified, how interesting the situation! But however solemn and interesting, the path is plain before us. Would you reap the fruits of your toils, your losses and your blood; it is *indispensably necessary* that the fœderal union of these States be cemented and strengthened—that the honor of the Great Council of the nation be supported, and its salutary measures carried into execution, with unanimity and dispatch, without regard to partial views, or local interests—that the credit of this new empire be established, on the principles of the strictest justice—and its faith maintained sacred and inviolable, in whatever way, or to whatever description of persons it has been pledged, or may at any time be pledged. Alas! that its glory has suffered so much already, by the failure of our currency. Let us carefully repair this waste of honor, if we cannot repair the waste of property, by the most sacred adherence to our engagements, in all future time. Among the virtues necessary to be attended to for the accomplishment of these great ends, industry and frugality are of the highest moment.

John Rodgers, *The Divine Goodness displayed, in the American Revolution: A Sermon preached in New York, December 11th, 1783* (New York, 1784), pp. 37-38, 41.

To what extent an influence of an earlier day may determine the actions of an individual remains an unmeasured factor in human experience. Of the fifty-five delegates that attended the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia at various times from May 25 to September 17, 1787, thirty-nine alone signed the completed document. And the Presbyterian influence among these men was strong because a number of them had been prepared in the College of New Jersey. Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut, James Madison of Virginia, Edmund Randolph of Virginia, Gunning Bedford of Delaware, William Patterson of New Jersey, William Davie of North Carolina, and Luther Martin of Maryland had attended the College of New Jersey. Hugh Williamson, of North Carolina, had been a former preacher in the Presbyterian Church. William Livingston, of New Jersey, had been a member of the First Presbyterian Church of New York. Even though men like Ellsworth, Madison, and Randolph had attended the College of New Jersey, they were not Presbyterians. The former was a Congregationalist, and the other two were Episcopalians. James Wilson, at one time a pewholder and trustee of the Carlisle Presbyterian Church, Pennsylvania, was one of the foremost exponents of a strong union. "No one saw more clearly the central point of the great problem before the convention; no one labored more steadily, or was able, casting all details aside, to grasp more firmly the most essential and significant principles. He shared with Madison the honor of leadership dur-

ing the first half of the convention's work, planning and toiling and speaking for the recognition of national life in the establishment of a national government." (Andrew Cunningham McLaughlin, *The Confederation and the Constitution*, p. 188.)

The choice between a confederacy and a republic was very much the same as a choice between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism; for Congregationalism is a confederacy of independent churches, but Presbyterianism is an organized representative and constitutional government. The Presbyterian form of government was familiar to the great mass of the inhabitants of the Middle and Southern colonies; it was the form of government which Puritan Episcopacy has ever preferred. The Congregationalism of Connecticut and of other parts of New England tended in the same direction. There is no reason to doubt that Presbyterianism influenced the framers of the Constitution in their efforts to erect a national organism,—a constitutional republic. But Congregationalism also had its influence in defining the limitations of the supremacy of the general government and in the reservation of the sovereignty of the States in all those affairs which were not assigned to the general government. It is true, Presbyterianism was prepared for such limitations by the Scotch Barrier Act of 1697, which prevented hasty legislation by an appeal to all the Presbyteries of the Church; and still more by the persistent resistance of American Presbyterianism to any legislative power in the Synod, without the consent of the Presbyteries. But the limitations of the general government in the American Constitution were beyond anything known to Presbyterianism before, and the reserved rights of the States were vastly in excess of any rights ever claimed or exercised by Presbyteries. The American form of civil government was a happy combination of some of the best features presented in Presbyterianism and in Congregationalism.

Charles Augustus Briggs, *American Presbyterianism*, pp. 356-357.